

THE LACLEDE BLADE.

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Entered at the Laclede postoffice for transmission through the mails as second class matter.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 23, 1904.

JUDGE PARKER admits that he twice voted for a dishonest dollar but he will not say that he regrets his action.

The republican party has always been a consistent party. The democratic party has always been an inconsistent party.

No ONE has yet answered Tom Watson's question as to what has become of the democratic policy of denouncing the national bank system.

THE record of the republican party is one of things done and pledges fulfilled; that of the democratic party is one of things promised and pledges broken.

IOWA is noted for its republican orators. Hon. Geo. L. Dobson should be greeted by a large audience next Tuesday night, as he is considered one of the best stump speakers in the state.

WALBRIDGE has been fighting boodlers and corruptionists in Missouri for many years and is better qualified to give us a clean and honorable administration than the young man from Tennessee who has just joined the democratic machine in this state.

THE democratic party never gets right on national issues, except when it tries to steal the republican platform. After lecturing for many years that free silver at 16 to 1 was the paramount issue, it now drops the question and actually admits that the gold standard is irrevocably fixed.

THE great issue of the campaign is fully summed up in the following utterances of Senator Fairbanks in his speech of acceptance: "The election of the president is imperatively demanded by those whose success depends upon the continuance of a safe, conservative and efficient administration of public affairs."

THE platform on which Theodore Roosevelt stands reiterates the time-honored republican principle in favor of fostering home industries in order that American workmen may be steadily employed and well paid. The democratic platform is verbose and evasive, but, sifted of all its platitudes, it simply reiterates the democratic hostility to any tariff that will protect American industries.

WE are very anxiously awaiting some utterance from Judge Parker relating to his views upon the tariff question. He accepts the democratic platform which calls protectionism robbery. If he would only be a little more explicit and explain to us who is being robbed we would be the better able to judge of just where he stands and how far revision would go were he in a position to advocate a change in our present tariff laws.

THE railroad employees of the United States, who are receiving now annually over a quarter of a billion dollars more in wages than during the operation of the Wilson-Gorman tariff law, are quite content that they should be called "non-protected laborers." As a fact, however, the railroad laborers of the country are as fully protected as any other and would be the first to feel the blight of lower tariff or free trade.

THE statement that the republican party has always revised the tariff up and never down is false. Time and time again as the tariff has been revised by republicans the duties on commodities have been lowered in accordance with the lower prices which have been brought about through competition and labor-saving devices. A single illustration will show this. The first duty imposed upon steel rails was equivalent to \$75 per ton. The last duty imposed, also by republicans, was \$7.84 per ton.

From India.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

For many days I have been impressed with the fact that age was creeping stealthily upon me but recently this knowledge was brought home vividly by one of my girls being married so that I am now virtually a mother-in-law. It was the first wedding in our school and naturally the children were very much excited over it. I look back upon the occasion with a sigh of relief for not only is the work over but thereby a girl has been saved from the most wretched and sinful life to which women may descend.

In India there is a wide spread custom among the Hindu people, of dedicating the most attractive and beautiful daughter of the family to serve the gods, to be a temple girl, in reality to be all that is bad under the garb of piety. By such a life she can turn into the family coffers a few extra rupees, can adorn herself with a little more jewelry and can command a certain amount of fear from her heathen neighbors. To the parents' ignorant and superstitious minds such a life is very meritorious. Yearly hundreds of bright little girls are thus sacrificed on the altar of sin. I have known mothers to say "God demands such service from us; when we have three or four children we must give one to be a jogi or He will be very angry and wreak vengeance upon us. Vows once made we dare not break so long as we live." Poor deluded parents of India! If they could only realize something of the purity of God's nature and of His abhorrence for sin there would not be such an abundant harvest for Satan to reap each year. Could you but know some of the horrors of a jogi life you would grow sick and faint at the mere mention of the word.

In the Gulbarga district about a hundred miles from here there is a heathen family who according to this custom had dedicated one of the daughters to serve the gods. This first ceremony takes place in the infancy of the child. This girl grew up in her home knowing full well the life she must lead, yet realizing none of its awfulness. To her young mind it meant only jewelry, money and a certain amount of power. The years rolled by uneventfully until she was about sixteen years old. Then her family declared that their former vows must be fulfilled and the final ceremonies which would forever doom her to a life of shame must be performed. It was set for a certain feast which would occur a few weeks later.

Here in Vikarabad some of our native Christians became homesick and asked a few days' leave to go to visit their relatives, saying that they might also bring some children back to school if we would take them in. After going as far as Gulbarga by rail they had to walk twenty-five miles thro' a more or less untravelled country to reach the village of their relatives. Arriving there they learned the fate which awaited the girl and set themselves to the task of gaining the mother's permission to bringing her to school. It was not easily accomplished but they won by bringing the mother along too, so that she might see how the girls would be cared for. After a few days' she left her two daughters here, the second being quite small, and returned to her village.

The elder girl, Ittabar, had a long hard struggle to give up her faith in idols. The Gospel has never been carried to their village and her young mind had been well drilled in heathen beliefs. Naturally it took some time for her to realize the utter folly of idol worship and the truth regarding the Heavenly Father. After three or four months when she had learned about God and His worship a Christian young man, one of the first converts baptised by Mr. Garden, asked to marry her. Of course he did not ask her—that would have been very improper—but he made his request to

her relatives and to me. We were all willing but when I broached the subject to the girl she was most emphatic in her refusal to even think about it. However time changes many opinions and decisions. So after I had dropped the matter for a few weeks she began to tell others, for my benefit, that she would marry him if her mother and brothers consented. (Her father is dead.) We wrote asking such permission but received no reply. Then the girl sent word to me—native girls are very bashful or try to be so regarding their marriage and so will not talk direct to us often—that whether or not they consented she would marry the young man. We sent another letter and also the legal notice of the intended marriage. Just as we were beginning to breathe easy and think that the required fourteen days would elapse without any reply for the coming in which case we could go ahead with the wedding here came a letter forbidding the marriage. Then we were in a dilemma. Finally just as we were about to send a third letter word came that the mother and her eldest son were on their way here. You may be sure we awaited their arrival with no little interest. For they might take the girl away and make her a jogi while we would be helpless to interfere; or they might forbid the marriage and leave the girl here—a situation rather awkward for us in some ways. The son did not come, (who knows but what he was providentially turned back.) but a nephew accompanied the mother. From the very first the mother opposed the match tho' she acknowledged that she was pleased with the appearance of her would-be son-in-law. And so the discussion went on. After hours of persuasion and reasoning on the part of her Christian relatives she would give her consent. Then Satan would gather all his forces and besiege her with fears concerning the wrath and vengeance of the gods until she would withdraw the consent. Sometimes she was in an agony of terror. "If these jogi vows are broken and my daughter marries I know fearful punishment will be visited upon us" she would say. Or, "If I consent to this the direst evil will befall me." And again, "If my daughter is married I am sure the gods will strike her dead." It was pitiful to see her so tormented by her fears. Finally the battle culminated on Friday morning. For several hours the discussion, sometimes very heated, went on and it seemed as tho' the mother would come off victorious in her opposition. From time to time we got rumors of drift of it all and finally when things seemed darkest the girl could keep quiet no longer. She begged me to let her go and speak to her mother, to which I consented. Arriving at the house she was astonished to find the bridegroom there and for the time was quite disconcerted. (For from the time the matter had first been broached to her until after the wedding not a word passed between them) But recovering herself she said "Mother, I am going to marry this man. It matters not to me whether you or my brothers consent I mean to marry." The mother was astonished beyond measure. "My child, you never used to speak this to me. You have been forced into this marriage. Who taught you these strange notions?" she asked in anger. "I have not been forced into this nor has any person taught me to talk in this way but God gave me this sense," the girl replied. Then the mother's wrath waxed hotter and she told the girl to leave her, that she was a very disobedient daughter and etc. After that strange to say, the mother ceased to oppose and even grew meek enough to eat her food, which previously she had steadily refused, from her future son-in-law's hand.

As we were leaving on Monday for a meeting in Bangalore it was decided that the wedding should take place the next day, Saturday at four in the afternoon. The Orient may be and is fearfully slow in some respects but

sometimes it wakens and makes up for lost time. This girl was baptised that afternoon, Friday, in class meeting, the mother being present thro' most of the service. Finally she could stand no more so she left and went to the house where she laid down, refusing to get up at all that evening or to take any food. The evil one was making his final effort to terrorize her until she would take back her consent.

Then the bridegroom tried strategy and presented her with a very nice sarri or cloth such as the women wear but still she lay there refusing to accept or reject it. We were not a little curious to see which she would do. If she accepted it, it was a sign of absolute surrender but if she returned it, there might still have been any amount of trouble. However she was wise enough to know that she did not get such sarri given her every day and so she put this one on and wore it.

Meanwhile preparations for the wedding had been going on. Needles were busily plied in making the bride's simple outfit and by Saturday noon all was ready. Flowers had been sewed in garlands, bouquets prepared and every one was half wild with excitement. About two o'clock the native pastor and his wife, the bride's relatives, the bridegroom, together with all the school girls and the people living in the yard, assembled to witness the engagement. The native pastor officiated and addressed the company somewhat on this wise: "If any one should ask why we have come together to-day I would say that it is to witness the engagement of Monayya and Ittabai. He will now proceed to put the engagement ring upon her finger." Whereupon the much abashed young man strode across the room took the hand of the bride, much against her will(?), placed the ring on her finger and marched back again. The company sang a Telugu lyric appropriate to the occasion, the pastor offered prayer and all adjourned to the veranda to partake of the wedding breakfast. Mats were spread on the floor and all sat down on these and ate their po-low which is a kind of rich spiced rice and which is generally served on such festive occasions.

Then all had to hurry to get ready in time for the wedding. Ittabai is naturally fair and she made a very pretty bride. Her wedding costume consisted of a pink calico skirt, a silk cholie or short jacket and a white sarri. All told it cost about a dollar and a quarter. The bridegroom was attired in the conventional black. Shall I say? Hardly. His coat was black but his headcloth and loincloth were white. They were both barefooted of course. The wedding took place in the boys school house where all our church services are held. The bride and groom sat on chairs up in front while a hymn was sung and then the ceremony was performed in Telugu by Mr. Garden. It was the ring ceremony but used in a new way. Instead of the wedding ring the native women have a small gold charm hung on a string around their neck. This is tied on by the bridegroom who at the same time repeats the words. "With this charm I do thee wed" and etc., and etc. Then came the funny part; for I think your equanimity would also have been disturbed had you seen the bridegroom stoop down to put the thin silver rings on her second toes all the time trying to repeat after the minister. "With these rings * * * I do thee wed * * * and promise * * * to love and cherish * * * till death doth part" and etc. The rings proved to be too small so that finally he had to leave his task but partly accomplished. The scene was comical indeed and I had hard work to keep from laughing.

After the prayer a hymn was sung and then all adjourned to our bungalow. We served tea and plain cake to all present. Afterwards with much ado the Christian women escorted her to her new home which is in our yard. The mother seemed per-

fectly reconciled and as happy as tho' she had not opposed the marriage at all. Before going back to her village she insisted that the happy couple should come soon to visit them. And so they were married. It is to be hoped that they will always be as happy as they now are and that their home may be one from which Christian light shall shine forth into the heathen darkness, so dense around us.

Had our school done nothing more it seems to me the saving of this one girl would well repay all the labor and money which has been spent in keeping up the school. However we have two or three others whom we are trying to save from the life of a jogi, besides a goodly number of Christian girls, and I would ask your most earnest prayers that they may, without the loss of one, grow up into useful women who shall help to save the women of India. Sincerely,

ELIZABETH J. WELLS.

Vikarabad, Deccan, India,
July 28, 1904.

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